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JAPAN AND DEMOCRACY

By Kiyoshi K. Kawakami

If any Japanese are, as reported, "amazed and stunned" by Hirohito's New Year rescript disclaiming his divinity, they are ignorant of the history of Shinto.

Beginning in the Seventh Century many Japanese Emperors became Buddhists, some going so far as to abdicate and retire to Buddhist temples in quest of Nirvana. Certainly these Emperors did not consider themselves divine. In abjuring his divinity Hirohito has given up something he himself never claimed.

In the Eighteenth Century two scholars, Motoori and Hirata, in an effort to restore Shinto to its former position and to free the Emperor from the domination of Buddhist militarists, emphasized the divine origin of the Japanese and particularly of the Emperor. Yet while they were harping upon the divine-origin dogma, another scholar, Tatsumaro Ichikawa, ridiculed it, asserting that the "Sun Goddess", the alleged progenitor of the Imperial Dynasty, was a title of comparatively modern invention, and that if the ancestors of the Japanese were not human beings they were more likely to have been birds or animals than gods.

When, in 1868, Japan abolished feudalism and restored imperial rule, her statesmen put into the mouth of the then youthful Emperor Meiji the Oath of Five Articles, committing his Government to a policy of liberalism -- a charter reaffirmed by Hirohito's recent rescript.

Yet the same statesmen contrived to invest the Emperor with a certain sanctity, placing him above human criticism, and they ruled in his name. This they considered a justifiable expedient to strengthen a new government still beset with difficulties and threatened with civil strife. They envisaged the day when that government would be secure enough to adopt liberal measures outlined in the Imperial Oath.

The Constitution of 1889 was only a step in that direction -- a compromise

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between the conservatives, who would exploit the Emperor as a divine ruler, and the liberals, espousing the ideals of Western democracy.

II

Following World War I statesmen everywhere professed idealism. Encouraged by this apparent tendency, Japan's liberal leaders hoped to steer her ship of state away from reaction. One sign of the "new age" was the educational tour on which Hirohito, then 19, was sent to Europe -- an unprecedented event in Japan's history. His itinerary, as originally conceived, included America, but this was changed because the conservatives considered America more dangerously democratic than Europe.

Under the influence of Prince Saionji and other liberal advisers, Hirohito was convinced of the wisdom of placing the Japanese throne in a position similar to that occupied by the British Crown. This is made clear in the memoirs left by Prince Konoye, who killed himself on December 16 last. Emulating the passive position of an English king, Hirohito rejected Konoye's appeal that he issue positive orders against the course followed by the militarists in the critical years preceding Pearl Harbor. That Hirohito warned the militarists against the danger ahead is obvious in the memoirs. Had he gone beyond that, he might have been defied by the militarists.

Under the British system of government the Crown has, as Walter Bagehot tersely sums up, "three rights -- the right to be consulted, the right to encourage and the right to warn". When the King has encouraged or warned his Ministers, his duty is done, and his Cabinet is free to make its own decision for which it alone is responsible. The late President A. Lawrence Lowell, of Harvard University, in The Government of England, elaborates Bagehot, saying:

> "Ministers direct the action of the Crown in all matters relating to the government. The King's speech on the opening of Parliament is, of course, written by them. . . . Since the King can do no wrong, he can do neither right nor wrong. He must not be praised or blamed for political acts . . . His name must not be brought into political controversy in any way, or his personal wishes referred to in argument, either within or without Parliament."

Such was the concept of government fostered in Hirohito's mind by Prince Saionji and Count Makino. Viewed in this light, the surrender order issued by Hirohito in the

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wake of the destruction of Hiroshima was a measure contrary to his cherished political ideals. It was a desperate step he was compelled to take because the Cabinet was powerless to act in the teeth of militarist opposition.

III

Democracy is not a matter of name or form, or even of constitution. If it were, it could be made overnight. Democracy is a state of mind and, precisely because it is a state of mind, must grow through a slow process of evolution.

The mere separation of Shinto from the government is not a herald of democracy. Nor is the adoption of a liberal constitution. Again the point may be illustrated in the case of England. There the Crown is the head of the established Church. It appoints archbishops, bishops and most of the deans and canons, and has in its gift many rectorships and other livings. In words put into the mouth of an imaginary British Prime Minister by Hall Caine: "The Church was founded on Acts of Parliament, it was endowed and established by the State, its head was the sovereign, its clergy were civil servants . . ."

As to the Crown's constitutional prerogatives Bagehot makes this startling statement:

> "Not to mention other things, she [Queen Victoria] could disband the army; she could dismiss all the officers, from the General Commanding-in-Chief downwards; she could dismiss all the sailors too; she could sell off all our ships of war and all our naval stores; she could make a peace by the sacrifice of Cornwall, and begin a war for the conquest of Brittany. . . . In a word, the Queen could by prerogative upset all the action of civil government within the government."

Yet England is a democracy because its people, through centuries of evolution, have developed a state of mind which does not permit the Crown to take any arbitrary measures, religious or temporal.

IV

Shinto has counted no more politically than has the Church of England. The Japanese Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief. The Home Ministry subsidized Shinto largely to keep shrines in repair, to the delight of antiquarians and tourists. To call termination of this subsidy religious emancipation is misleading.

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Yet Japan is a far cry from democracy, because her people have not yet attained a state of mind which can be mobilized to check ambitious militarists who have exploited both the Emperor and Shinto to advance their grandiose ideas. Those men are now being eliminated by the rigorous measures adopted by the Allies. The people, through the misery and suffering inflicted upon them by the misadventure of the militarists, may learn to keep them and men of their kind forever eliminated.

The most potent incentive to the evolution of the desired state of mind is the institution of an economic condition more satisfactory to the masses than that prevailing before the war. If this is done even the present Constitution can be made to meet the requirements of democracy.

Meanwhile, the Emperor poses no obstacle to Japan's reorientation. Having abjured his divinity, Hirohito may yet proceed to take more dramatic steps; such as abolition of the peerage, removal of his revered portrait from schools and government offices, release of his land holdings for the benefit of farmers of the poorer class, renunciation of his hereditary revenues in exchange for a civil list somewhat more liberal than the prevailing one. His present civil list of 4,500,000 yen, or $333,000 at the current rate of exchange, is small compared with the British Crown's corresponding income of some two million dollars.

What will the Japanese people eventually do with the throne? The question may perhaps be best answered by the following statement in Lowell's book already quoted:

> "The government of England is inconceivable without the parliamentary system, and no one has yet devised a method of working that system without a central figure, powerless, no doubt, but beyond the reach of party strife. . . . If the Crown is no longer the motive power of the ship of state, it is the spar on which the sail is bent, and as such it is not only a useful but an essential part of the vessel. . . . The small republican group in England thought the monarchy useless and expensive; but the people have now learned that republics are not economical . . ."

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K. K. Kawakami, an outstanding Japanese liberal, was for many years Washington Correspondent of the Osaka Mainichi and the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi. After Pearl Harbor he was active in the preparation of psychological warfare material for U.S. governmental agencies. This is his second contribution to HUMAN EVENTS.

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NOT MERELY GOSSIP
A Supplement to HUMAN EVENTS Vol. III - No. 5

Man, according to Aristotle, "is a political animal" and certainly politics assumed a prominent role in the first meeting of the new Parliament of Man -- the General Assembly of UNO.

It started with the Russian effort to secure the election of Trygve Lie, the Foreign Minister of Norway, as President of the Assembly. Moscow's motive was not so much to defeat the British candidate, Foreign Minister Spaak of Belgium, as to secure the later election of Belgium, rather than the Netherlands, as representative of the small Powers of Western Europe on the UNO Security Council. Russia was strongly opposed to the Netherlands having a seat on this body because of Dutch dependency on Great Britain arising from the Indonesian revolt. Under the system of apportioning honors, election of a Belgian as President automatically excluded Belgium from a Council seat.

Partly because Andrei Gromyko, head of the Russian delegation, is none too subtle; partly because of Russian unpopularity, especially in the Latin American countries, Moscow lost out on both counts. In spite of open United States support Lie was defeated by Spaak for President of the Assembly. And Holland was then promptly elected to one of the six non-permanent Council seats. The opening sessions of UNO clearly indicated that while the "Big Three" ran Dumbarton Oaks, and dominated at San Francisco, the small Powers intend to have their say, as at Geneva, in the actual operation of the new League.

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A very prominent industrialist, whose CIO employees are well satisfied with their present generous wage scale, had occasion to spend a busy morning on the Hill this week. "I was shocked", he told us, "by the jitters in Congress over the strike situation. Actually, there is much in the picture which seems to me encouraging. Never in my memory have so many men been on strike with so little violence or social disorder. Of course industrial unrest was certain to follow the end of hostilities. As business has grown bigger so have the unions, with the result that the numbers affected by strikes are very large. But the really notable fact is that the strikes are orderly, the labor discipline is excellent and the issues are, on the whole, focused with logic and intelligence rather than passion."

This employer, however, pointed out that the serious interruption to production, plus the anticipation of wage levels raised to unprecedented figures, is greatly increasing inflationary pressures. "It is the first time a stock market boom has been sparked by fright alone", he commented.

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The almost mutinous demonstrations of GI's are forcing reconsideration of our military and foreign policy. True, the War Department was to blame in mishandling the points system; and few doubt that the Communists organized some of the outbreaks. Yet the protests obviously sprang from deeper causes. It was inevitable that American boys, accustomed to thinking in terms of fruitful, constructive lives, should rebel against wasting their most precious years amid far-off jungles, deserts and rubble. This explains the critical attitude, but does not solve the problem of fulfilling the commitments into which Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policy led us.

Russia can keep mass armies on foreign soil by an iron totalitarian discipline, exercised on illiterate peasants who have never known any of the comforts of life. The British maintained their world system with a small professional army backed by mercenaries. But democratic America cannot take the Russian course. Obviously Americans will not tolerate conscription abroad in peace times, nor probably at home -- as is indicated by the decreasing possibility of passage of the conscription bill. Can we then adopt the British imperial system? The answer is rhetorical: Could we

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overcome popular prejudice and hire the best available mercenaries -- the German POW's?

In short, it is now becoming clear that we must cut our foreign commitments to limits sanctioned by our popular attitudes. Military experts, therefore, are busily trying to estimate how many volunteers we can recruit and what fraction of our global foreign policy such a regular army will be able to support.

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Our Leftist press often assails as "war mongers" those Americans who merely criticize continuous appeasement of Russian aggression. Yet Communists in the Far East are openly talking about "war with America". Communist organizations in Korea, Indo-China and the Philippines are presenting the following argument to possible converts: "A war between the United States and Russia is inevitable, and Russia will win. Therefore, you had better join us." Significantly, the Philippine Communist organization which during the war was called "The Anti-Japanese Front" is reportedly changing its name to "The Anti-American Front".

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For 60 kilometers along the road between Bremen and Hamburg a friend, who travelled that way a few weeks ago, saw nothing but war materiel -- tanks, cannon, armored cars, carriers, etc. All these weapons appeared to be kept in excellent shape, "ready to go", by the British soldiers who were guarding them. Not far away are the "Muenster Lager", the huge German prisoner-of-war camps, housing close to a half million. According to reliable information in Washington, the British are holding intact in these camps the cadres and staffs of 30 German divisions. The British have been very secretive about this matter, and have given no satisfaction to Marshal Zhukov who brought up the subject at meetings of the Big Four in Berlin.

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Last fall, Foreign Minister Spaak of Belgium held some little publicized negotiations in Washington with American officials. It is now believed that the talks concerned uranium in the Belgian Congo; and that a deal was made between the United States and Belgian Governments by which the United States was assured of uranium supplies and Belgium was promised economic assistance. The uranium deposits in the Belgian Congo are considered the richest in the world and most of the ore used in the manufacture of our atomic bombs came from that area, not from Canada, as popularly supposed.

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An American officer recently in the Polish-occupied parts of Eastern Germany reports that "the Polish Administration is hopelessly disorganized and no security whatever exists for the inhabitants of the region. . . . While the Poles seem to have discontinued the large-scale evacuation of the population, they are now taking measures to starve the German population, hoping thereby that they will leave 'voluntarily'." When Germans apply to the Polish authorities for ration tickets for the refugee-swollen population of the town, they are often told that there are "too many people living in this town" and that therefore they will receive only half the rations applied for.

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A cynical French view of the UNO meeting in London, as reported by the Baltimore Sun: "Their eyes, damp with emotion, the delegates acclaimed declarations of principle and then, wiping their glasses and coughing self-consciously, they drew forth from their icy brief cases their statistics, their claims, their demands, their differences and their hates. At noon in the great hall the glorious flame of idealism illuminated their visages; in the evening their faces were lit only by the flames of the kitchen fire from which each was trying to pull out his own chestnut as he sat in the shadows making his bargains." President Truman's statement that the United States intends to be the sole Trustee for former Japanese-mandated islands would seem to support this Gallic dig.

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